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ABSTRACT

Guidelines are suggested for developing measurable institutional objectives and for carrying out an educational needs assessment survey. The paper first notes the importance of measurable objectives to evaluation efforts and then delineates suggested benchmark, formative, and summative criteria that can be used by a college in assessing its progress toward two institutional goals: raising the community's median level of formal education and raising the area's standard of living. After suggesting four other goals toward which a college might work, the paper discusses the need to assess the unique characteristics of the local community and provides a step-by-step guide for carrying out three phases of a needs assessment survey: (1) face-to-face interviews with 2% of the area's citizenry; (2) face-to-face interviews with at least 20% of all area employers with four or more employees; and (3) a mail survey of all teachers and administrators of public and private schools and colleges in the area. This guide discusses steps to be taken in determining sample size, hiring and training interviewers, planning survey publicity, and calculating and publicizing survey results. Finally, the paper discusses the ongoing efforts that should be made to update the survey data over the years and presents a hypothetical time schedule delineating day-by-day the activities to be completed over a two-month period during the community needs study. (JP)

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AN ASSESSMENT STRATEGY FOR A HYPOTHETICAL RURAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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It is assumed that Fantasia Community College will commit its resources to accomplish certain common and widely accepted community level objectives. The processes it uses will vary, however, ranging from formal credit-granting courses to informal non-credit workshops, seminars, or lectures. In like manner, the clientele groups will vary. Some processes will target the entire community, while others will zero in on specific audiences, e.g., political leaders, youth graduating from high school, adults of all educational ranges, the aged, etc. Finally some efforts will be made by the community college alone, while others will be made in consort with other groups and agencies.

Regardless of variations in process, clientele groupings, and sponsorship, decisions must be made concerning the overall goals and specific objectives the college intends to achieve. That is to say, goals must be stated and objectives determined so that programs can be measured. Without such goals and objectives, assessment is rendered meaningless in any evaluation sense.

To illustrate the preceding, suppose one of the goals of Fantasia Community College is to raise the median level of formal education in its service area. This task may be evaluated in the following way:

Goal: Raise median level of formal education.

Bench Mark Measures	Formative Measures	Summative Measures
1. Type and number of formal education opportunities available to residents of community previous year, and numbers participating in each.	1. Type and number of formal education opportunities available to residents, and numbers participating in each during period of evaluation.	1. Change in opportunities and number participating.
2. Number of adults who were functionally illiterate in last census.	2. Basic education programs offered during evaluation period.	2. Number of adults now functionally illiterate.

3. Typical dropout rate for various types of formal community college programs in the state.	3. Dropout rate for various types of formal programs offered by Fantasis Community College during period of evaluction.	3. Difference between typical dropout rate and rate experienced by Fantasia Community College.
4. Median years of education achieved by adults in last census.	4. Programs offered to residents during period of evaluation.	4. Median years of education now achieved by adults.
5. Number of adults expressing interest in formal education survey.	5. Number of formal education opportunities offered by Fantasia Community College during evaluation period.	5. Position of those expressing interest who participated.
6. Expression of location and time preferences by potential students.	6. Time and location chosen by Fantasia Community College.	6. Consistency between preferences and actual schedule.
7. Portion of those surveyed who had participated in some form of formal education during previous 2 years.	7. Formal educational opportunities offered by Fantasia Community College during evaluation period.	7. Portion surveyed who had participated in in formal education during evaluation period.
8. Portion of those surveyed with less than a high school education who expressed interest in formal education.	8. Establishment of programs, publicity, public relations, etc.	8. Portion of those surveyed second time with less than a high school education who expressed interest in formal education.

Suppose another goal of Fantasia Community College is to raise the standard of living in the service area. This task may be evaluated in the following way:

Goal: To raise standard of living in service area.

Bench Mark Measures	Formative Measures	Summative Measures
1. Position of those unemployed who are interested in finding employment.	1. Portion of employment seekers who were served by occupational education conducted by Fantasia Community College.	1. Portion of those with courses that found jobs as compared to portion not served who found jobs.

2. Portion unemployed who for no valid medical or personal reasons are not interested in finding employment.	2. Portion of non-employment seekers who were served by occupational education conducted by Fantasia Community College.	2. Portion of those served with courses who found jobs as compared to portion not served who found jobs.
3. Portion of unemployed who were interested in employment and saw need for more training.	3. Portion who were served by relevant occupational courses.	3. Portion of those served who found jobs as compared to portion who were not served who found jobs.
4. Portion of employed who wanted to change to new line of work; portion who sensed they needed more training to secure that work; type of new work desired.	4. Portion who wanted new work that were served by occupational course; portion who wanted new work and saw a need for training that were served with occupational courses; occupational courses developed.	4. Portion served with courses who secured jobs as compared to those not served; portion who were aware of need for training and were served with course who secured jobs as compared to those not served; portion of new work categories served with course.
5. Portion of employed who desired advancement in position; portion who sensed need for training in order to advance; type of training needed.	5. Portion who wanted advancement and were served by occupational courses. Types of occupational courses developed.	5. Portion served with courses who advanced on job as compared to those who were not served; portion of training needs served with courses.
6. Portion of adults who expressed interest in occupational courses.	6. Type and number of occupational courses offered during evaluation period.	6. Portion of those interested who were served as compared to those not expressing interest; portion who expressed interest after period of evaluation.
7. Expression of time and place preferences for courses.	7. Actual time and place chosen by Fantasia Community College.	7. Degree of consistency.
8. Typical dropout rate for occupational courses.	8. Dropout rate expressed by Fantasia Community College.	8. Difference or similarity.

9. Portion on public assistance.	9. Portion of those on assistance served by Fantasia Community College occupational courses.	9. Portion of those served who dropped from assistance roles; portion not served who dropped from assistance roles.

There are at least four other goals which Fantasia Community College might work toward: (1) to improve health and safety conditions within the service area; (2) to improve home and family life within the service area; (3) to enhance civic responsibilities within the service area; and (4) to improve the use of leisure time within the service area. These four goals could be evaluated by the same methods used to evaluate the first two goals.

But these are merely illustrations. They may not even be relevant for Fantasia Community College, for Fantasia Community College is unique, just as all other community colleges are unique. It is unique because its service area is unique, just as all other service areas are unique. Relevancy, therefore, cannot be determined, nor can general goals be formulated for programs outside the traditional college transfer area until a good statistical survey of the needs and wants of the service area clientele has been done. The data acquired from this survey become the justification and base lines for community service program development. They also become the base lines from which program effectiveness and goal attainment can be measured.

Survey

In the initial survey of the needs and wants of the Fantasia Community College service area, the following tasks are recommended:

1. A face-to-face interview with two percent of the service area citizenry. (A two per cent survey is ideal. One per cent would be trustworthy.)

2. A face-to-face interview with at least twenty per cent of all employers who employ four or more people. (If there are fewer than 200 such employers, do all of them.)

3. A mailed questionnaire to all teachers and administrators of public and private schools and colleges.

In order to accomplish task #1, the following steps are necessary:

1. Calculate two per cent of the estimated population of each of the counties in the service area. (The estimated population data for hypothetical counties are in the appendix of this paper.) This will give the total number of interviews necessary for each county.

2. Calculate two per cent of the estimated population of each community within each county. (The estimated population data for hypothetical communities are also in the appendix of this paper.) If two per cent yields a number below ten, use the number ten. This calculation will give the total number of interviews for each community.

3. Assure randomness of the interviewee selection in a community by using a city directory whenever there is one available. Simply number all of the residences listed, and select the residences to be visited by using a table of random numbers (found in any good textbook of statistics.) If a city directory is not available, use the files of the local utility company which supplies electricity. Do not use the telephone directory or the files of the water company. This will skew your sample in favor of the more affluent.

4. Assure randomness of the interviewee selection in the rural areas by using the files of the local electric company. If such files are not available or cannot be acquired, determine the total miles of public roads within the rural area. Divide the number of interviews needed by the number of miles. This will give the number of interviews needed per mile. Whenever there are no residences on a particular mile of roadway, add the number of interviews needed for that mile to the number needed for the next mile. Whenever there are more residences than needed in a particular mile of roadway, spread the interviews out so that consecutive residences are not visited.

5. Hire at least one interviewer per fifty interviews. (Even the most energetic interviewer find it very difficult to properly conduct more than fifty interviews.)

6. Encourage the mass media to give the survey and its purpose wide publicity.

7. Train the interviewers well. Impress upon them the need for accurate information. Assure them that a "thank you" letter will be mailed to each interviewee upon the completion of the interview. (This will make the interviewer aware that the work is being monitored.)

8. Give each interviewer an official identification card as well as a letter from the college president stating the purpose of the survey.

9. Pay each interviewer at least $1.50 per interview, plus transportation expenses.

10. Collect completed interviews from the interviewers at least once each week. Use this collection time to also check on possible problems they are having in the field.

11. Begin the tabulation of survey data immediately. Complete files should be maintained, not only of the households visited, but of all times of program-development significance.

12. Once the residential survey is completed, share the results with the mass media and all relevant agencies. (The community college, at this point, becomes a useful area information resource, and begins to be thought of as more than just another two-year college).

In order to accomplish task #2, the employer survey, the following steps are necessary:

1. Secure employer information from the public tax records in the state capitol. (These are usually found under titles such as "Basic Labor Market Information.")

2. Select those employers to be interviewed, and insure the representativeness of the sample by using a table of random numbers. (However, if there are fewer than 200 employers who employ four or more people, a total survey should be done.)

3. Proceed in the same manner as steps five through twelve in the residential survey.

General Comment:

Interviews in urban areas are generally conducted best during early evening hours. Interviews in rural areas are generally conducted best during early and late afternoon hours.

Educator Survey

In order to complete the educator survey task, the following steps are necessary:

1. Secure cooperation of top administrators of all local school districts and of all public and private schools, institutions, colleges, and universities within the Fantasia Community College service area.

2. Send a questionnaire and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to all faculty members and administrators of these educational institutions. (It would be helpful if the top administrators would send the questionnaire out themselves, along with a cover letter urging cooperation. It would also be helpful and insure a higher return if the questionnaire could be sent back to those administrators. The questionnaire could later be collected at their offices.)

3. Complete steps eleven and twelve under residential survey.

Once this initial survey is completed, steps should be taken to see that it is updated yearly. An on-going project using senior high school students in local school districts could implement this task easily. Only a partial survey would have to be done each year, something on the order of one per cent of the population, five per cent of the businesses, and ten per cent of the educators. A total replication of the original survey ought to be done every five years, using the same mechanism as that used for the partial survey.

Five year goals should also be established for community services, along with yearly objectives. These yearly objectives should undergo continual evaluation. At the end of each five years, when the data are in for the most recent survey, the previous five-year goals should be scrutinized carefully. Some will be modified, new dimensions added. Many will be deleted since they will have been attained. New goals will be added.

HYPOTHETICAL TIME SCHEDULE FOR
INITIAL SURVEY

Monday 3 June:

(1) Secure economic information from state department.

(2) Secure city directories, electric company files.

(3) Begin developing random samples.

4 June:

(1) Begin developing questionnaires (use advisory committee if possible.)

(2) Continue random sample development.

(3) Start selecting interviewers.

5 June:

(1) Contact mass media and educational administrators.

(2) Begin survey publicity.

(3) Continue sample and questionnaire development.

6 June:

(1) Begin publicity.

(2) Continue sample and questionnaire development.

(3) Continue selecting interviewers.

(4) Print name tags.

7 June

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Begin training of interviewers.

(3) Complete random sample and questionnaire development.

8 June:

(1) Complete training of interviewers.

(2) Begin local survey.

Monday 10 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Continue survey.

(3) Meet with interviewers to discuss survey problems.

11 June:

(1) Be sure publicity is getting to all counties.

(2) Assign interviewers to counties and communities.

12 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Send mailed questionnaire out.

(3) Begin survey in adjoining counties and communities.

13 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Continue survey.

14 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Have interviewer meetings.

(3) Collect completed surveys.

15 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Begin tabulating data.

(3) Continue survey.

Monday 17 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Continue data tabulation

(3) Continue survey.

18 June:

(1) Continue publicity.

(2) Begin collecting questionnaires from educators.

(3) Continue data tabulation.

(4) Continue survey.

19 June: Same as 18 June

20 June: Same as 18 June

21 June: Same as 18 June and collect completed surveys.

22 June:

(1) Begin publicizing survey process.

(2) Continue data tabulation.

(3) Continue survey.

Monday 24 June: Same as 22 June

25 June: Same as 22 June

26 June: Same as 22 June

27 June: Same as 22 June

18 days 28 June:

(1) Complete survey.

(2) Collect completed surveys.

(3) End publicity.

28 June:

(1) Complete survey.

(2) Collect completed surveys.

(3) End publicity.

29 June:

(1) Begin data analysis.

(2) Complete records for interviewer pay.

(3) Continue data tabulation.

Monday 1 July:

(1) Complete data tabulation.

(2) Continue data analysis.

2 July: Continue data analysis.

3 July: Continue data analysis.

4 July: Take day off!

5 July: Begin writing preliminary draft of survey results.

6 July: Continue writing draft of survey results.

Monday 8 July: Complete draft of survey results.

9 July: Meet with college administrators to discuss survey results.

10 July: Meet with college administrators and suggest immediate and long-range goals and programs.

11 July: Continue development of immediate and long-range goals and programs.

12 July: Release survey results to mass media.

A few ending words of caution: depending upon what questions are included in the questionnaires, program development decisions may or may not be immediately possible. Some community college administrators are most interested in specific course suggestions from the service area clientele. Others are most interested in detecting community problems (whether they be social, political or economic) and making program decisions based on those problems. In the first case, the administrators are assuming that clientele can readily articulate educational needs. (a hazardous assumption indeed!) In the latter case, the administrators are opting to develop courses or programs by inferring educational needs. The authors suggest that neither strategy be used exclusively. Both can easily be incorporated within the original survey design.

APPENDIX

Hypothetical Service Area Population

COUNTY	1970 POP.	PERCENTAGE CHANGE FROM 1960	ESTIMATED 1974 CHANGE	ESTIMATED 1974 POP.
Alvic	15,319	54.1	2,152	17,471
Aycock	19,073	18.3	1,184	20,257
Bouldin	12,301	9.0	408	12,709
Canady	9,453	4.2	159	9,609
Crowder	7,000	15.9	384	7,384
DeWine	5,844	-2.0	-48	5,796
McCarty	7,731	-4.8	-156	7,575
		TOTAL ESTIMATED POPULATION (service area)		80,801

HYPOTHETICAL POPULATION OF SERVICE AREA COMMUNITIES
BY COUNTY

Community	1970 Pop.	Est. 1974 change	Est. 1974 pop
Alvic County (17,471)			
Ayers	189	40	229
Burke	858	180	1,038
Deaton	434	96	530
Fehr	3,936	866	4,802
Maples	266	59	325
Robbins	156	34	190
Aycock County (20,257)			
Fox	309	56	365
Hodges	124	22	146
McGill	7,239	1,303	8,542
Nelson	143	26	169
Painter	160	29	189
Patterson	282	51	333
Phipps	300	54	354
Sprouse	248	45	293
Tupper	58	-10	48
Bouldin County (12,709)			
Boyd	2,271	204	2,475
Layne	53	5	58
Myles	1,670	150	1,820
Rainey	1,354	122	1,476
Seals	236	21	257
Silkey	32	3	35

Community	1970 Pop	Est. 1974 change	Est. 1974 pop.
Canady County (9,609)			
Bailey	1,287	55	1,342
Clifton	145	6	151
Friedlob	92	4	96
Crowder County (7,384)			
Monger	430	68	498
Nestor	626	101	727
O'Connor	137	21	158
Rose	321	51	372
Whalon	860	138	998
DeWine County (5,796)			
Butler	394	-8	386
Roberts	179	-4	175
Ross	77	-2	75
McCarty County (7,575)			
Callison	563	-28	535
Leavy	1,397	-70	1,327
McNally	45	-2	43

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